

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 006881

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARN, NEA/PA, NEA/AIA, INR/NESA, R/MR,
I/GNEA, B/BXN, B/BRN, NEA/PPD, NEA/IPA FOR ALTERMAN
USAID/ANE/MEA
LONDON FOR GOLDRICH
PARIS FOR O'FRIEL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR JO](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON IRAQ

Summary

-- The lead story in all papers today, August 16, is the situation in the Iraqi city of Najaf, with reports highlighting "preparations" for the "storming" of the city by U.S. forces. Reports also treat the ongoing Iraqi National Conference. Another major story is a reported hunger strike by Palestinian detainees in Israeli jails and new Israeli "secret" measures to disrupt the hunger strikes. The recently launched Al-Ghad Arabic daily published on its front page the results of a poll carried out on a sample of 1000 people in Jordan about the Jordanian economy and the Iraqi situation. The poll said that 65% of the respondents believed that Jordan's economy has not benefited from the change in Iraq and 48% believed it unjustified for Jordanian trucks to continue servicing Iraq.

Editorial Commentary

-- "Chalabi: a victim!"

Columnist Salah Hzaayen writes on the op-ed page of independent Arabic daily Al-Ghad (08/16): "It would of course be crazy to defend a person like Ahmad Chalabi, because he is up to his ears in financial and administrative corruption.. It is without malice that we say that U.S. President George Bush is probably the least smart of all American presidents, something that has become a central idea for many reporters, artists and cartoonists. Yet, he has shown himself stupid enough to fall victim to the misleading efforts of a person like Ahmad Chalabi, who was the President's confidant and who was taken advantage in the worst manner, as being reported by the American media these days.. Whoever reads the American press these days would believe that the United States has fallen victim to malicious advice provided by Ahmad Chalabi.who misled the United States into the conflict with a dictator like Saddam Hussein who not only terrorized the Iraqi people and invaded his Kuwaiti neighbors, but also accumulated weapons of mass destruction with which he threatened America itself. All this of course is ridiculous. America's well-know desires in the region prompted it to invade Iraq and it is for this reason that the United States launched a campaign to prove that the former Iraqi regime was a threat to the United States.. People like Chalabi have never been more than pawns in the hands of the great and massive machine whose desires and aspirations are boundless. For the sake of such desires, (the U.S.) is ready to victimize any person, even persons more important than Chalabi. The point is that the American regime did not get rid of Chalabi because of his corruption.. In this sense, Chalabi is not more than a victim of a regime that holds no value for people, including those who provided great services up until that moment when it was time to get rid of them and throw them in the dustbin of history. In this dustbin of history, people of the world will find many names and Chalabi is just the latest."

-- "The war did not stop"

Chief editor Taher Udwan writes on the back-page of independent, mass-appeal Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm (08/16): "After seventeen months of occupation, American forces continue to fight in Iraq, despite the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime, the collapse of Al-Baath state and the return of all the Iraqi 'American parties' to Baghdad. So who is this enemy that the Americans have been fighting all this time? In the beginning, this enemy was said to be the members of the old regime, then it was said to be Al-Qaeda, then the Wahabis, followed by Zargawi and infiltrators from Syria, and now the enemy is said to be Iran and its followers. The truth that the U.S. administration does not want its people to know during the elections

campaign is that the enemy that America is fighting now in Iraq is the entire Iraqi people.. What democracy is this that the Iraqi National Conference is trying to launch in Baghdad in view of the renewed war against the Iraqis? It is an empty democracy that does not include the opponents, or contrary opinion, or the representatives of the Shiite and Sunni trends, or the nationalist and Arab parties. Under the current formula, the Conference is going to be just like the temporary government, useless and incapable to rule absent the presence of 130 thousand fully-equipped American soldiers."

-- "The American aggression against Najaf"

Daily columnist Fahd Fanek writes on the back-page of semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (08/16): "The temporary Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Alawi had the chance of a lifetime to prove that he is an independent Iraqi president and a representative of Iraqi sovereignty. He could have declared his opposition to the attack on Najaf and asked the American forces to withdraw from the holy city and leave him to deal with Muqtada Al-Sadr. But he kept silent.. The [U.S.] President wants to tell his people that he did not fail in Iraq and that the American forces are capable of imposing order and controlling all the cities and the militias, thus presenting an image of a victor instead of his current loser and defeated image, and getting more votes in his campaign for a second term in office.. The current battle proved that the war goes on. It has put a stop to the myth that the resistance movement is limited to the Sunni triangle, and proved that the resistance is on a much wider scale, thus confirming it as national in scope."

HALE